



An assessment of policies guiding school emergency disaster management for students with disabilities in Australia

Author(s): Boon HJ, Pagliano P, Brown L, Tsey K
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Abstract:

Recent weather-related disasters (i.e., floods, fires) impacting Australia may potentially increase in frequency and severity as a result of predicted climate variability. The dearth of literature pertaining to school emergency response planning for vulnerable students with disabilities (including those with intellectual disabilities) when such disasters occur and the lack of evidence-based support for school guidelines addressing the needs of such students led the authors to investigate the presence and extent of governmental policies and guidelines underpinning disaster management in schools in Australia. In the absence of routine policies and procedures, students with disabilities may be placed at risk to ill-advised evacuation efforts or neglected during severe emergencies. The study's results indicate that insufficient consideration has been given to the emergency preparedness planning and management with respect to meeting needs of vulnerable students with disabilities. The findings suggest that disaster preparedness is underresourced and possibly neglected. Although the particular needs of vulnerable students with disabilities are briefly noted in the various state governments' education policies, they have not been systematically considered in the context of overall disaster planning for Australian schools, with the ambiguity of student characterization terms such as special needs adding to the problem. The study also scrutinized the terms with respect how they might impact school plans that relate to emergency management. The authors conclude that processes already embedded in local schools for students with disabilities may be possible vehicles to appropriate statewide emergency management planning. They recommend that education authorities worldwide review current emergency management policies in a consultative manner with schools, researchers, first responders, and carers so as to minimize risk for students with disabilities in natural disaster emergencies.

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Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change;
 surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

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Policymaker

Exposure :

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event

Extreme Weather Event: Flooding, Wildfires

Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Children

Other Vulnerable Population: Disabilities

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Policy/Opinion, Research Article

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

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A focus of content